

On March 28, some parents from the Espoo international school, which operated in two locations (Opinmäki and Kivimies), were gathered at the EIS auditorium in Opinmäki. The goal of this meeting was to discuss the state of English education in Espoo, as requested by the city of Espoo. Parents were conveyed to this meeting by Rapo Anne-Marie Rapo, the school principal. The Espoo municipality, with an agenda, called for the meeting to propose a motion currently under discussion at the municipal level.

The city representative introduced their proposed change, which was articulated in 2 points as follows:

1. The change in student admission may see the students that have studied for more than a year prior in English have direct admission to EIS, whereas other students from non-English language schools would write the entrance.
2. A progressive separation of the Kivimies campus from Opinmäki. That is to make Kivimies an independent school with its principal in the long term.

The municipal representative gave a brief introduction to this motion and the timeline. The municipality seeks to acknowledge the parents' consent. We were left with open-ended questions that we believe may need to be addressed to minimize our frustration and that of our children in future.

We lament that the municipal representative was not brief enough before this meeting. We felt he couldn't address most of our specific questions. It could have been better to communicate appropriately before, get our concerns and discuss them with proper explanation during the meeting.

The overall feeling from the meeting was dissatisfaction from the parents. We are being embarked on a journey they have not been adequately explained. The meeting further reassures the parents that the municipality needs to brainstorm further with some hypothetical but realistic questions that are to come. Below is a non-exhaustive list of concerns raised and needing to be addressed. We would highly appreciate the highest possible authority addressing these concerns in writing.

**1. Concerning admission policy, parents are against the policy change as they believe the current admission is not broken why fix it?** The municipality failed to answer these hypothetical cases during the meeting: **a)** Who has priority at the entrance? The top student from the admission list or the first from a previous English school? **B)** This school is overbooked at all times; we will now have two waiting lists, one for the entrance examination and another for those who didn't write the entrance examinations; which of the list will be enforced first? **C)** In case a child does not have a placement after coming to Finland from a previous English school, moves to an integration program, and maybe to a Finnish school, is this child still considered as previously studied in English from the admission perspective? **D)** The school has several children from Finnish homes but fluent in English; for a reason, they decided to do English education. With the new admission policy, they will have fewer opportunity to join the school. **E)** Espoo has several bilingual (English/Finnish) schools, and some of those children often join EIS at some point. Would they be considered as coming from an English school or Finnish? **F)** Finland is about fairness; is it unfair to deprive a deserving student with outstanding English skills to privilege relatively weak students simply because they may be from an English-speaking country? **G)** The admission plan should be on hold if the municipality does not have a precise algorithm and list of scenarios on how the admission process will go about. **H)** what is your ties breaker? When five students, for instance, who previously attended English schools, will want to join the same class, but there is only one spot, what are your suggestions for picking the one? To add some complexity to this, if, at the same time, that given class has a waiting list of 5 students that wrote the entrance, how do we choose? Parents are confident that this scenario will happen, and the municipality should be straightforward in dealing with such a scenario.

2. Can the municipality ensure the parents that resources will be increased at Kivimies to get similar infrastructure when separated from EIS?

3. Some parents foresaw that once separated, Kivimies might become an English school. Can we be reassured that they will apply for their IB license if they go past the 6<sup>th</sup> grade?

4. Parents would like a written document stating that all the students from Kivimies are guaranteed to get to EIS automatically in grade 7, with no entrance exam.
5. A group of parents suggested transferring the kids from Kivimies to Opinmäki and starting fresh with Kivimies because they applied for EIS. Can the municipality explore this possibility?
6. The school naming or branding was also an issue; some parents requested to explore if the two schools could keep EIS, maybe A and B.
7. Some concerns were raised about the well-being of teachers voluntarily forced to Kivimies from Opinmäki and have not been able to return for years. Are they free to return to their initial job placement, or will they be forced to voluntarily accept a new contract at Kivimies?
8. The schools are increasing in size, and we haven't heard about the hiring process; how many staff/teachers will the municipality allocate to Kivimies under these plans? How many more teachers will we hire at Opinmäki in the near future since the Ylakoula level will have more students?
9. A concern was raised about the standard, especially for students joining the school without entrance. This school to the best of our knowledge is not a proximity school. Hence the school should be able to decide the best entrance policy without interference.
10. People reported fewer activities in Kivimies, and the sense of international community is weaker. The municipality should commit to adding resources at Kivimies.
11. Parents would like a guarantee that no kids would be moved from Opinmäki to Kivimies against their will.
12. Can a parent transfer a kid from Kivimies to Opinmäki under the assumption that there is no longer an entrance for those previously in English school? Are those spots reserved for parents willing to move their kids from Kivimies and probably have another child in Opinmäki? Should we assume they would not be new recruitment for grades 2,3,4 at Opinmäki?
13. EIS and Olarin Koulu are using Opinmäki; we are, therefore, short of space. Can the municipality offer some more space?
14. The growth plan was not clearly explained. What is the maximum number of students you would like to have in the English stream in 5-10 years? In 3 years, we will have 4 classes of 6<sup>th</sup> grade at Opinmäki and maybe one or two at Kivimies. Since they will all be in 7-9 grade at Opinmäki, do we have enough resources to provide a safer space for all those kids?
15. You are increasing the number of students in what was formerly known as compulsory education in Finland (1-9) for English schools in Espoo. The compulsory aged for education was revised to 18; what are you doing to ensure that those kids remained scholars beyond 9<sup>th</sup> grade? Espoo and Kauniainen have 100 places in Lukio for English-speaking students (50 in Etela Tapiola and 50 in Mattindel). What are your plans to increase the number of positions since most of these kids do not have the Finnish level required to attend vocational school? Can you please clarify your intention, please? Increasing the number of students in grades 6-9 without increasing the number of places in Lukio would worsen the competition amongst kids and facilitate more dropouts at age 16 when the kids need to be in school.
16. Are you planning to have a vocational English-speaking school in Espoo anytime soon?
17. Can you increase the size of Kivimies in the long term because EIS will already be full when the kids reach the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

18. We currently have over 25 students in most EIS classes; what is your limit? How many more can we take? Please state your absolute hard limit.
19. There is a need for expansion to have the two schools because we can't just keep growing.
20. Are you planning to increase the number of students at Opinmäki?
21. Is there any possibility of having Opinmäki facilities not be used by Olarin Koulu because this may give us more space and help the school prepare classes?
22. We understand the difficulties in arranging English-speaking schools in Finland, and we have been grateful to have these schools free of charge and praise you for doing that. However, we would like you to increase the places in English education. For instance, some of our Espoo schools are already bilingual and have capable teachers that could run an English school. Maybe you should allocate one English class in those schools.
23. Concerning the entrance test that will be happening on April 12, what will the entrance rule be? As mentioned earlier, we recommend the entrance be as usual, especially for the first grade, which is hardly contested.
24. If the number of applicants exceeds the number of students, what are the criteria for entrance for everyone else? What criteria are you going to apply in first grade? They have not studied English before, even in an English house.
25. Another set of parents emphasized again that they wanted the test to happen.
26. How do the synergies work between EIS and Kivimies? Is Kivimies going to be 100% English?
27. How can we ensure that all the subjects and facilities are the same? For instance, the electives, facilities, or additional languages.
28. The three classes that were promised to EIS Opinmäki last year, and they said instead they could have expansion in Kivimies. If these classes were promised, can these 1,2,3 classes come here and Kivimies become a whole new school?
29. The way that implementation of having two international schools in two places was not ok. The project should have better thought.
30. Can we implement a transfer policy that allows kids that want to leave Kivimies to come to this side and vice versa?
31. Activities are a severe concern at Kivimies, e.g. chess club, dance club etc.